

THE APPROACH OF VICARIOUS TRAUMA: VIGNETTES

Jean Koh Peters

Monday, 12 January 2015 10:15 a.m.

Look at these buildings! I'd forgotten how the spires point up into blue sky, how wherever you look there is a filigree, an acorn and leaves, a gargoyle, a hand-hewn archway. I suddenly remember the last time I walked in from the lot last June—trudging, head down, to-do list clicking across my viewscreen. Does the sun always slant down into Wall Street this way on a January morning?! I'm light as a feather.

Tuesday, 20 January 2015 7:10 p.m.

Maybe this show we've been watching, "State of Affairs," will help me understand ISIS for [ILS Client's] case! What does ISIS understand, from its own point of view?

Friday, 23 January 2015 2 p.m.

All of my new students have simulated interviews, well!, and six of the eight have their first cases. ILS boot camp was fun! I enjoyed rather than dreaded catching up on developments in social group. Sometimes it's such a slog.

Tuesday, 27 January 2015 7:10 p.m.

Don't think I can watch "State of Affairs" anymore—the brutality sneaks up without warning. I can't turn on my radio or open the Internet without finding ISIS, everywhere.

Wednesday, 28 January 2015 3:13 a.m.

Jolted awake, but I don't know by what. I've been here before. I can toss and turn, and wake Jim in the process, but I won't go back to sleep. I plug in my earphones and do my 27 min lying down meditation before getting up read case write-ups in front of the fire.

Tuesday, 3 February 2015, 3:03 a.m.

Again? I'm wide awake. The dream is still fresh—I'm holding a happy, bouncing baby and suddenly the baby is gone and I hear a massive bang as something hits the ground. My heart is still pounding. I sigh and plug in my earphones.

Saturday, 7 February 2015 8:15 a.m.

At Jazzercise, a particularly large and rowdy class, so the music is blasting. The tension of the week ebbing, and I feel euphoric, thinking "I need to do this every week." Suddenly, I notice that the person at the desk has joined the class. No one is between the front door and the closed door to this studio. Someone could come in and shoot us all. I see the two women in front of me lying on the floor and blood pooling. "No, Jean, this is not real. You are having an intrusive thought, and this is your VT talking. Go back to your body." I shake it off, sort of, and enjoy, sort of, the rest of the workout. I carry a half-heaviness into

quilting with my friends in Branford, and head to Bishops for apples and vegetables and find some extra treats. By the time I unload them into my fridge at 4 p.m., I notice the lightness is back.

Wednesday, 11 February 2015 5:30 a.m.

I wake up with a leaden lump in the pit of my stomach. I can't pinpoint its nameless worry—just free-floating anxiety, all over my body. Every step feels burdened. I remember this, well, but haven't felt it for so long.

I take my first steps on the tennis court in feet of concrete. Balls whiz by, but then I get to one, two, most. Suddenly, I'm flying around the court. Driving to work, I notice—the weight is gone.

Thursday, 12 February 2015 3:15 p.m.

Sue and I are walking through the Met, but I'm seeing nothing. Cubism, meh. Madame Cezanne looks dour, though the sketches are touching, a little. We are leaving, and walk by a tall slender light sage green art Nouveau French vase; I am stopped in my tracks. Sunlight is dripping green down its slender sides. Ca loves ceramics—I have to call her. From the train I text Sue—"Still thinking about that vase!"

Friday, 20 February 2015

What doesn't help:

- 1) Defaulting to news in the car (try the all classical station?)
- 2) Heavy desserts before bed
- 3) Reading the Times before bed
- 4) The snow
- 5) Cold Sweet Potato Fries

What does help:

- 1) Daily Meditation/prayer time
- 2) Home cooking (Jim's slow cooker brisket!)
- 3) The smell of my first gardenia bloom
- 4) Quilting Bertie
- 5) Yo-Yo Ma on Pandora while reading ILS affidavit drafts
- 6) Yoga in front of the fire

What might help:

- 1) Book on Tape in the car (*The Signature of All Things? All the Light We Cannot See?*)
- 2) More Panera salads
- 3) Making a snow angel
- 4) Bifocals to make quilting at night in front of the tv easier
- 5) Play the piano this weekend